

he asked, did you ever think you would live this long?
Frankie, I haven't lived this long, I've lasted this
long, good
night.

I hung up the receiver and pulled the
bottle
toward me.

A FINAL WORD ON NO FINAL WORDS

near the end of the interview he leaned forward and
asked, "now is there any final word you'd like to give to
your audience?"

"no," I answered, "no final word."

I felt his disappointment.

"no final word?" he asked again.

"no," I said.

he had wanted a nice closer, he had wanted me to save
his ass,
he had wanted me to save the asses of my readers.
well, I had worked on saving my own ass but I felt that I
hadn't really done so

but just to come up with some ditty of a line
would have been
totally misleading ultra crap.

"well," he recovered himself and said to me, "it's been
a real pleasure to interview
you."

"sure, baby," I said.

then he motioned to the camera and the sound men that
it was over
and they began packing their
gear.

"you fellows care from a drink?" I asked.

"no thanks," the interviewer spoke for everybody, they were
pulling plugs from the walls, folding equipment into
cases, it were as if I no longer
existed.

they had what they needed.

I stood with cigar and drink and watched them file out
the door and into the night.

then they were gone with their asses that needed saving
even worse than mine.

EACH MAN'S HELL IS DIFFERENT

I get reports about a dear friend in
Europe, this man is not the complaining
type

so what I've learned doesn't come from
him

but he can't hide everything
and some of it filters through from
sources:

he must go to a hospital every other
day, he is dying by the god damned
inch.

his home life has long been
unhappy
and now

his wife has become
suicidal.

most of my letters to him
go unanswered
and when he does
reply
the responses are clipped and
stark.

I've learned he can't drink, smoke,
even consume coffee
and

there are
occupational
problems.

he's not old.

my friend always wanted to be
a writer
he became a translator
working the language of the
successful practitioners
into his own.

the long hard hours
with the dream
getting further
and further out of
reach,
his wife going
mad:

"you're always
typing!"

a killing unhappiness:
never knowing
what you might have
been.